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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine whether the phenomenon known as "parasocial interaction" (PSI)--the perception of a face-to-face relationship between spectator and media performer--precedes the formation of loyalty to a particular television newscast, or whether viewers see newscasts as a way of reaffirming their ties with the community. Subjects, 364 viewers of local news in the Seattle, Washington, area, were asked whether they would be likely to engage in any of eight behaviors listed on a questionnaire, such as feeling good to hear the newscaster's voice, or acknowledging the newscaster's signoff. They were also asked questions concerning the importance of newscaster concern for the local area (perceived community orientation--PCO), their own attachment to the area, and questions of demographics. Results showed that PSI was correlated with viewer loyalty, but not necessarily an antecedent condition. Additionally, age was not found to be a factor in viewer loyalty--damaging Mark Levy's conclusion that older people are more likely to experience PSI. Respondents' community ties were more strongly related to loyalty than to PCO. Finally, there was a negative correlation between respondents' education and PSI, although it was weaker than those in earlier findings. The study casts doubt on the belief that newscasters' casual banter and "kidding around" creates and reinforces viewer loyalty. (Notes, tables, and references are included.) (JC)

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Characteristics of Loyal and Non-Loyal Television Newscast Viewers

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CS 210 560

CHARACTERISTICS OF LOYAL AND NON-LOYAL TELEVISION NEWSCAST VIEWERS !

INTRODUCTION

What are the major antecedents to becoming a loyal viewer of particular television newscast? This is a question of some practical import to broadcasters concerned with how to attract retain a stable audience (Houlbert, 1984). The question also inevitably leads to more basic issues about the nature of mass audiences.

Conceptually, the question might be approached from a variety of perspectives. Viewer loyalty might be explained as resulting from receiver characteristics (e.g., age, social isolation, etc), characteristics of the newscast (format, content, etc.), and *characteristics of the newscaster (appearance, tactics, etc.), to mention just a few. Of the three possibilities mentioned, recent research has focused on the latter by suggesting that certain newscaster tactics result in a phenomenon called "para-social interaction" which in turn produces loyal viewing (Levy, 1979; Houlberg, 1984).

Although this approach to the question may appear promising, the author will try to establish that the case for PSI is still very preliminary and that there are other productive explanations. Thus, the major purposes of this study will be to design a more rigorous test of the PSI hypothesis, and to identify additional antecedents of viewer loyalty.

EXTENSION FROM ENTERTAINMENT TO NEWS

The notion that radio, television and the movies give the illusion of a face-to-face relationship with the performer originated with Horton and Wohl in 1956. They based their idea on analysis of a broad range of anecdotal evidence from entertainment programming at the time--e.g., Dave Garroway, Steve Allen, The Lonesome Gal, Count Sheep. The communication tactics on which PSI is based were derived from the tactics which these performers used to create an "illusion of intimacy."

For example, Horton and Wohl described how Dave Garroway used the device of small talk to create the impression of talking with members of the audience.

> "I tried to pretend that I was chatting with a friend over a highball late in the evening...Then--and later--I consciously tried to talk to the listener as an individual, to make each listener feel that he knew me and I knew him."

Horton and Wohl identified three such devices used by entertainers at that time, which they felt contributed to para-social interaction:

(1) Treating the supporting cast as a group of intimates, which includes the audience by extension.

(2) Blending with the audience--e.g., by leaving the stage and mingling with a studio audience.

(3) Camera technique--e.g., positioning the camera to be the "eyes of the audience."

Of course, all this is just one side of PSI. One must also consider whether, and how, the audience is receptive to these tactics. Horton and Wohl claimed the audience is called upon to play an "answering role"--i.e., to participate in the role played by the media personality. Such answering roles included:

(1) admiring dependent to (persona as) a father surrogate;

(2) earnest citizen to a fearless opponent of evil;

Regardless of how plausible these mechanisms might sound in an entertainment context, one must still question their applicability to other communication situations. One must ask, what communication tactics are employed by newscasters that would tend to promote PSI? And if such tactics are identified, one must also ask how the audience could be expected to respond.

As a preliminary to this study, three local newscasts in the Seattle market were observed by the senior author and sixteen students in a survey research class. Viewing of these newscasts revealed tactics used extensively by all three newscasts:

(1) Casual banter among members of the "news team"; by implication the audience is included in this circle of "friends."

(2) Use of a "fellow traveller" perspective on the news. The newscaster reacts to the news as if he/she were in the audience--disappointed that the Sonics lost, concerned about that accident on I-90, disgusted with the weather, etc.

Of course, such devices cannot be assumed to work. As Horton and Wohl point out, audience members may reject the implied complementary role. They may even find cynical amusement in refusing the gambit and playing some other role. On the other hand, if these devices do work, the question of how becomes important. What is an appropriate complementary role for members of the audience? What kind of relationship might be established between newscaster(s) and members of the audience?

These are difficult questions. For one thing, the viewer has the option of reacting differently to different members of the "news team," or of relating to the team as a unit. For another, treating

the newscaster(s) as (if) a close friend or intimate does not seem altogether plausible. It appeared that viewers were being invited to see themselves as members of the same community--as "Seattleites," not as personal friends. The complementary role implied was that you treat the newscaster(s) as you would fellow Seattleites. This role, if operative, may provide a basis for some of the responses which characterize PSI--e.g., reflecting on the newcaster's advice, sympathesizing with his/her difficulties, and forgiving his/her mistakes. Or, it may simply result in the viewer relating to news from the perspective of a fellow community member (i.e., Seattleite in this case).

MEASUREMENT ISSUES

Horton and Wohl used the term "para-social relationship" to refer to the "...seeming face-to-face relationship between spectator and (media) performer." Subsequent research has treated this label as if it were a tightly defined concept that could be operationalized in a single measure. However, this was anything but the case. Horton and Wohl associated such a wide range of behaviors with their term that it might be more aptly characterized as a syndrome. Clearly, they were not addressing a behavior so much as a pattern of related behaviors.

Viewing PSI this way, its measurement should be considered problematic. Which of the following behaviors discussed by Horton and Wohl should a measure of PSI be designed to tap?

A. Direct reactions to (newscaster) behavior (e.g., replying to an opening greeting)

B. Residues of behavior

1. affective evaluations (of the newscaster)
2. knowledge of (newscaster) attributes
3. viewer's perceived relation to (newscaster)
4. evaluations of the (news) program
5. interest in private life of (newscaster)
6. "gratifications"--e.g., feeling more contented

C. (Newscaster)/audience relationships

1. "bond of intimacy"
2. mutual loyalty
3. mutual helping

Given a map such as this, researchers should have some questions about where to start. Many different kinds of measures are implied. The decision of researchers so far has been to try to base the measurement of PSI on direct reactions to the newscaster. Levy (1979) says:

> "To demonstrate that news audiences interact on a para-social level with news personae, it is necessary to show not only that viewers interpret and evaluate the behavior or gestures of the newscasters, but that audiences also act or react based on those attributed meanings."

Houlberg (1984) was not explicit in setting the boundaries of his PSI index, but appears to have followed Levy's lead.

First, it can be agreed that the decision to focus on direct actions seems reasonable. It serves to limit the boundaries of the measure, while directing observation to reports of behavior rather than residues which may be several steps removed from actual "interaction."

Second, however, it is apparent that neither investigator stuck to this decision. The PSI indexes constructed by Levy and by Houlberg were not guided so much by this decision as by the output of a series of focus group interviews (Table 1). Of the seven items included in Levy's index, only three (3,4, and 6) are conceivably associated with direct reactions. In the Houlberg index, only one item (the second)

refers to a direct reaction. The majority of the items in both indexes refer to various residues of behavior.

Aside from the obvious validity problem here (i.e., just what is being measured?), there seems to be a reliability problem as well. This may be due to the failure of the indexes to measure a single underlying attribute (of any kind). But it could be due to conceptual inconsistency plus an inadequate number of items. The reliability coefficient reported by Levy (alpha=.68) was based on a subset of only four items. Houlberg did not report a reliability coefficient, but also based his measure on only five items. Even when there is (apparent) conceptual consistency to an index, six or more items are often needed to reach an acceptable level of reliability (i.e., alpha=.80).

PREDICTIVE VALIDITY

The predictive validity of PSI has entailed applying the idea to the development of listener/viewer loyalty and testing the measure against preliminary hypotheses as to what kinds of persons would be expected to engage in PSI.

Horton and Wohl saw PSI as an antecedent to audience loyalty. They were fairly explicit about how this might work: (1) regular exposure to a persona's program, then (2) an accumulation of shared experience (via PSI), leading to (3) an intensification of loyalty.

An adequate test of this proposition would probably require an experimental study. an experimental group exposed to tactics which facilitate PSI would be compared to a control group exposed to "neutral" tactics. The loyalty of members of the experimental group (but not the control group) should increase with repeated exposure to

the program.

Research so far has eschewed the experimental approach. Instead, surveys have been done which begin to identify correlates of PSI. If PSI is an antecedent of loyalty, it is certainly reasonable to expect them to be correlated. However, existing research does not even establish this much. All that has been shown is that PSI is positively correlated with frequency of newscast viewing (Levy, 1979, Houlberg, 1984). Thus, the existing research is of limited relevance to the Horton & Wohl proposition and to newscaster's concern with creating an audience of loyal viewers.

Although the present study, like its predecessors, will not be able to establish whether PSI precedes loyalty, it will at least test the hypothesis that PSI and loyalty are positively correlated. This will be accomplished by developing a measure of viewer loyalty rather than testing the PSI measure against frequency of viewing. If a meaningful relationship is found, then its robustness should be tested by introducing statistical controls for age, education, and income.

Horton and Wohl also attempted to identify personal attributes which they felt would predispose the individual to PSI. Social isolation was viewed by Horton and Wohl as an important condition predisposing the individual to PSI:

> "The 'personality' program...is peculiarly favorable to the formation of compensatory attachments by the socially isolated, the socially inept, the aged and invalid, the timid and rejected."

However reasonable and natural it might sound that the socially isolated and lonely should seek sociability through programs such as "The Lonesome Gal," it may be quite another matter to apply this

argument to newscasts. Is the in-group atmosphere and easygoing informality of local newscasts sufficient to elicit para-social responses from the socially isolated? As suggested earlier, the in-group feeling which local newscasts try to foster seems to be partly based on cognitive identification with the local community.[2]

Following Horton and Wohl's suggestion that social isolation predisposes one to PSI, Levy hypothesized that gregariousness would be inversely related to PSI. But does this follow logically from Horton and Wohl's proposition? Can the relative absence of gregariousness be regarded as the equivalent of social isolation and/or lack of social skills? This appears to be stretching the point, since there could be many other reasons for a low score on gregariousness.

Considering the shakiness of the hypothesis, it seems that the weak, negative correlation ($r = -.12$) Levy found between the gregariousness and PSI indexes should be interpreted very cautiously. The correlation does not support any particular conclusion about the relationship between PSI and social isolation. Neither is it very strong support for Levy's hypothesis.

The weakness of this evidence also suggests care in using the postulated relationship between social isolation and PSI as an explanatory mechanism. For example, Levy's finding of a positive correlation between age and PSI ($r = .28$) should not be explained as due to the greater social isolation of elderly people. There are many possible explanations, none of which are ruled out by this finding. If anything, Levy's findings seem to go against this interpretation, since he found no relationship between age and gregariousness.

In Levy's study, the strongest correlate of PSI was education ($r = -.52$). The social isolation postulate was also used to explain

this finding:

> "Since para-social interaction with news personae was assumed to be a functional complement or alternative for impaired or deficient social interactions, the better educated viewer may have less need for the para-social relationship and this is reflected in the strong negative correlation between education and para-social interaction (emphasis ours).

This argument is not especially compelling if one considers that the relationship between education and gregariousness was weak (r = .15). And there is a plausible alternative. Earlier in the article, Levy reported that high education participants in the focus groups often complained that banter, jokes, asides and "happy talk" between newscasters demeaned the importance of the news and was a waste of time. These are the very kinds of newscaster behavior that are supposed to facilitate PSI.

ALTERNATIVE HYPOTHESES

As an alternative to the PSI hypothesis, the author has suggested that rather than viewing the news from the perspective of the persona (i.e., PSI), members of the audience might view it from the perspective of the local community. That is, instead of becoming "friends," or intimates of the newscasters, they become fellow members of a local community while viewing the news.

Assuming that the occurrence of such a process can be documented, it then becomes a plausible alternative route to viewer loyalty. There is, however, an important difference in how the mechanism would be imagined to work. Whereas PSI is supposed to foster loyalty to an individual (e.g., an anchorperson), adopting a community perspective should lead to loyalty to the program, not necessarily to any one

individual. This would seem to raise an important issue about the relative importance of newscaster characteristics (e.g., "personalities") compared to program characteristics (e.g., format, perspective).

Some light can be shed on this issue by developing a measure of the community perspective process (called "perceived community orientation" or PCO). This will allow us to find out which measure has the stronger relationship to viewer loyalty. If it is the measure of PCO, this evidence would suggest that program characteristics may be more important that newscaster characteristics in building viewer loyalty.

This study also proposes an alternative explanation of the relationship between age and PSI that was reported by Levy. Levy's explanation, that it may be due to greater social isolation among elderly people, was questioned in previous discussion. But how else might this relationship be explained? Since the evidence does not support the idea that older people are more socially isolated, perhaps we should consider that older people may be more fully integrated into the local community. Previous work has shown that community ties tend to become stronger with age (Stamm & Fortinl-Campbell, 1983, p. 14). This raises the question whether persons with community ties are better able to relate to local newscasters in the manner described by PSI. If so, a measure of community ties should be positively related to PSI, and the observed relationship between age and PSI should attenuate when controlled for community tie.

A similar rationale might be applied to PCO. Age should also be positively related to this measure. But it seems more reasonable

(than for PSI) to expect that persons with community ties would be able to adopt the community perspective of a newscast. Thus, the relationship of age to PCO should also be attenuated by controlling for community tie.

If, as we suspect, older people have stronger community ties, then we should also expect that older persons will tend to be loyal viewers more than younger persons. We should expect a positive relationship between age and loyalty. But if this relationship is "explained" by community ties, then the relationship of age to loyalty should also be attenuated by controlling for community tie.[3] Controlling for PSI should have no effect on this relationship.

Study Objectives

Reconsideration of Horton and Wohl's seminal article on para-social interaction reveals a fuzzy but provocative idea of potential importance for understanding the relationship between broadcast personalities and their audience. Review of the empirical evidence shows that measurement questions are far from resolved, and that relatively little is known about the relationship of PSI to other social relationships (or lack thereof), or to viewer loyalty. The following objectives were identified to fill some of these gaps.

(1) To design a more conceptually consistent index of PSI and achieve a satisfactory level of reliability (alpha = .80 or higher).

(2) To examine the relationship between PSI and viewer loyalty.

(3) To explore the relationship between PSI and the viewer's community ties. This would test the suggestion that in the case of newscasts the presence of social connection (rather than absence) would enhance the occurrence of PSI.

(4) To question whether the positive relationship between age and PSI might be explained in ways other than the presumed social isolation of the elderly.

(5) To explore an alternative path to viewer loyalty (other than PSI). The communication tactics of local (Seattle) newscasters and the negative reactions of some of Levy's respondents to tact[illegible]s associated with PSI suggested an alternative mechanism for holding viewers--the community orientation of the newscast.

Methods

SAMPLE

The objectives of the study were met by surveying a probability sample of adults riding the state ferry system within a major metropolitan television market.[4] In-person interviews were conducted with 364 respondents from the local area; tourists and other visitors from outside the area were declared ineligible. Respondents were selected according to a multi-stage design in which (1) ten ferry runs were randomly selected from the weekly schedule, (2) random starting points were selected for each ferry trip; and (3) interviews were requested from the first twelve passengers beginning from a random start. Less than ten percent of the passengers approached, refused, or terminated the interview. Past experience has shown that ferry riders tend to be younger and higher in education compared to the metropolitan population. This presented no difficulties for the present study, since it was possible to introduce controls for demographic factors in the analysis of bivariate relationships.

MEASURES

A preliminary version of the questionnaire was developed and pretested with thirty-six adults from the Seattle area. Pretest results were carefully reviewed for the three critical measures--

results were carefully reviewed for the three critical measures--viewer loyalty, PSI, and perceived community orientation of the newscaster. The greatest difficulty was encountered with the PSI index. Several items had to be removed and replaced with new items. The following measures were incorporated in the final questionnaire.

1. Viewer loyalty--This measure was based on three criteria. To be classified as a loyal viewer, a respondent had to: (a) watch a television news program at least twice a week, (b) have viewed that program for six months or longer, (c) have a commitment to viewing that newscast. The commitment criterion was measured by asking repondents how much they agreed with four statements expressing commitment to viewing their regular newscast (e.g., don't like to be interrupted, miss it if it wasn't on, etc.). Four levels of viewer loyalty were established as follows:

    1. Non-loyal--watched for less than six months.
    2. Low loyalty--watched for six months or longer, but no commitment.
    3. Moderate loyalty--watch for six months or longer, with low to moderate commitment.
    4. High loyalty--watched for six months or longer, with high commitment.

2. Para-social interaction (PSI)--Respondents who had viewed a local newscast (at some time) were asked how likely they would be to engage in each of eight behavior descriptions representing direct responses to a television newscaster (see Table II for list of items). PSI scores were obtained by summing across the five-step items and dividing by the number of items. Scores ranged from one through five. An item analysis was conducted to evaluate the performance of the eight-item index (Table II). This analysis identified two items (3

and 7) that had low correlations with other items in the set, and had correlations of less than .50 with the index. Purging these two items from the index improved the reliability coefficient (Cronback's alpha) from .80 to .82. Therefore, the shorter version of the index was used in all subsequent analyses.

3. Perceived community orientation (CPO)--Respondents were asked to rate the importance of a series of eight statements describing the newscaster's tendency to present the news within a local community context (e.g., "...talks as if he or she really cares about the Puget Sound area," "...makes me feel like I'm really part of the Puget Sound area"). An item analysis found that all eight items had performed satisfactorily. Reliability of the eight-item index was .87.

4. Community tie--Three items were included to measure each respondent's degree of attachment to the local area as a place of residence.[5] These questions asked about past length of residence in the area, anticipated (future) residence, and home ownership. Based on these questions, the following degrees of attachment were distinguished:

(1) Non-attachment--short past and future residence length, renter;

(2) Low attachment--short future residence length, renter;

(3) Moderate attachment--long future residence length, home owner;

(4) Strong attachment--long past and future residence length, home owner.

5. Community information--One question was included asking respondents to rate the importance of being well-informed about what is going on in their local community.

6. Demographics--Respondents were asked age, last level of school

completed, and combined household income.

Results

PSI AND LOYALTY

Having met the first objective, the development of an improved measure of PSI that meets established standards of reliability, it should be more meaningful to examine predicted relationships with other variables. The focal variable in this analysis is actually viewer loyalty, not PSI, since PSI is simply one possible correlate of loyalty which has been viewed as a possible antecedent condition.

Findings in Table III show that as expected, the highest scores on the PSI index were found among the more loyal viewers. Although the difference here was highly significant, the strength of the relationship was only modest ($r = .29$, Table IV). It is only slightly stronger than the relationship previously reported by Levy between PSI and television news exposure ($r = .22$). However, evidence for a relationship between PSI and viewer loyalty would appear to have greater practical and theoretical significance.

The relationship was also found to be robust (Table V). The introduction of simultaneous controls for age, education, and income had no affect on the correlation.

PSI AND AGE

Previous work by Levy went to great lengths to explain a modest correlation ($r = .28$) between age and PSI as being due to the greater social isolation of older people, an explanation the author has questioned. If Levy's interpretation is correct, then we should have also found a substantial positive relationship between age and PSI, but we did not ($r = .08$, Table IV). This makes the explanation moot, but does not

rule out the possibility that persons (of any age) who are socially isolated would score higher on PSI.

PSI, AGE, AND COMMUNITY TIES

We have suggested, alternatively, that the relationship (which Levy observed) between age and PSI could be explained by stronger community ties among older people. Since we didn't find a correlation between age and PSI, this explanation is also moot. But the data do support our expectation that age and community ties would be positively related (r = .33, Table IV). This may be of some significance to viewer loyalty, even though it seems to have little to do with PSI.

Perhaps it would be more productive to ask why age is related to viewer loyalty. Age tended to increase with loyalty (Table III). And the correlation of age with loyalty was equal to that between PSI and loyalty. It was suggested earlier that this relationship might be explained by a tendency for older persons to have stronger community ties. To test this reasoning, the correlation between age and loyalty (.29) was controlled for community tie. As predicted, the partial correlation showed some attenuation (.21)--although it remained statistically significant. Controlling for PSI, however, produced no attenuation whatever in the original correlation. Thus, it seems even less likely that the relationship of age to viewer loyalty can be explained by PSI.

Although age proved to be unrelated to PSI, failing to replicate previous findings (Levy, 1978), it was positively related to PCO (Table IV). This relationship seemed better explained by community ties. The first-order partial in this case showed marked attenuation; r=.06 compared to r=.15 for the zero order correlation.

PERCEIVED COMMUNITY ORIENTATION OF NEWSCASTS

As an alternative to Horton and Wohl's hypothesis that viewer loyalty is an inevitable consequence of PSI, we proposed that loyalty to local newscasters could just as well follow from relating to the newscast as a mechanism for connecting to the local community. The first test of this hypothesis would be to see if the viewer's perceived community orientation (PCO) has any relationship to loyalty. Scores on the PCO index did increase with loyalty (Table III), and the relationship between PCO and loyalty ($r = .33$) was slightly stronger than that between PSI and loyalty ($r = .29$). The relationship of PCO with loyalty was also robust when controlled for age, education, and income (Table V).

Assuming that PCO also contributes to loyalty, it follows that this mechanism should be particularly effective among those with community ties. This implies that PCO should be positively related to community ties, and that community ties should be related to loyalty. The data in Table IV support both these expectations, but community ties were more strongly related to loyalty ($r = .36$) than to PCO ($r = .25$). Therefore, the relationship of community tie to loyalty must involve mechanisms other than PCO.

EDUCATION AND LOYALTY

Although education is generally positively related to readership of local newspapers, it is unrelated to loyalty of local newscast viewing ($r = .01$). This may simply be a result of more educated persons spending less time with television. But Levy has argued that

PSI is an ineffective mechanism with educated viewers who have less need for a para-social relationship. We also found a negative correlation between education and PSI ($r = -.23$), but interestingly, it was much weaker than Levy's finding ($r = -.59$). We suspect this difference may be related to a validity problem with PSI items that is more serious with educated viewers. In our pretests, we noted that some respondents expressed considerable amusement and apparent embarrassment in responding to some PSI items. As a result, we changed wording and dropped items to minimize the problem. The problem was less noticeable with the revised items. Thus, educated respondents may have been somewhat more likely to endorse our items than Levy's. But the fact that we still get a negative correlation may mean that this threat to validity still remains (albeit to a lesser degree).

Discussion

The broadcasting industry has attached much importance of late to emulating many of the tactics of successful entertainers in its presentation of news. Newscasters exchange casual banter in a relaxed atmosphere, and share their reactions to local news events. The use of such tactics is based on a belief that they elicit complementary behavior from the audience (i.e., what has been called "para-social interaction") and thereby contribute to the development of a loyal audience.

While the present study does not refute such reasoning, it does raise serious questions about the importance of para-social interaction as an antecedent of viewer loyalty. Para-social interaction was found to be a correlate of loyalty, but not a strong

one. Other plausible antecdents of loyalty were readily identified, and they proved sometimes to be stronger correlates of loyalty than para-social interaction--e.g., the (viewer's) perceived community orientation of the newscast, age, community ties.

The relationship of age with loyalty, which had been previously linked to para-social interaction via the mediating condition of social isolation, must be explained in some other way. Age, it turns out, is unrelated to para-social interaction. This study found some evidence that older persons with strong community ties are loyal viewers. But it may also be that older persons have had more opportunity to develop loyalty because they've been watching television news for a longer period of time.

The findings of this study suggest that broadcasters might pay more attention to how their news programs relate to viewers as members of a local community. In some ways loyal news viewers appear similar to readers of local newspapers.[6] They attach great importance to news of the local community, and they have close ties to the community. They do not seem to any great extent to be social isolates seeking compensatory attachment with a newscast persona. On the contrary, there is growing evidence that more educated members of the audience may reject such tactics.

Footnotes

[1] This study was conducted as a class project in CMU 408 at the University of Washington. The authors are grateful to the sixteen students who contributed to field work and data processing, especially to Hyeonbyer Lee and Lynn Reis.

[2] This distinction is explained in Keith R. Stamm and Lisa Fortini-Campbell, "The Relationship of Community Ties to Newspaper Use," Journalism Monographs, 84 (August 1983).

[3] Most previous theory and research supports the proposition that community ties predict local newspaper readership and subscribing. To the author's knowledge the only study relating community ties to use of broadcast media was recently reported by Shoemaker, et al., 1986.

[4] The Washington State Ferry System operating between Seattle and Bremerton, an area served by three major local television stations.

[5] Also explained in Stamm and Fortini-Campbell (1983). Three major kinds of community tie were distinguished--tie to (community as) place, structure, and process.

[6] A number or recent studies have documented the close relationship between newspaper readership and various kinds of community ties. See Stamm and Fortini-Campbell, op. cit. Also, Stamm (1985).

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Table I

PSI items used in previous studies by Levy[1] and Houlberg[2]

Item		Conceptual Dimension[3]
1.	The newscasters are almost like friends you see every day.	C1
2.	I like hearing the voices of the newscasters in my house.	B1
3.	When the newscaster shows how he feels about the news, it helps me make up my mind about that news item.	A, B6
4.	I like to compare my own ideas with what the commentators say.	A (?)
5.	When the newscasters joke around with each other, it makes the news easier to take.	B4
6.	I feel sorry for the newscasters when they make mistakes.	A
7.	Television shows you what people in the news are really like.	B2
8.	Daily visit helps make my problems easier to handle.	B6
9.	Talk to as if actually in my home.	A
10.	Like to know more about off the job.	B5
11.	Almost like an everyday friend of mine.	C1
12.	Everyday visit helps make me feel contented.	B6

[1] Levy's items: 1-7.

[2] Houlberg's items: 8-12.

[3] Refer to text, p. 5.

Table II

Correlation Matrix for PSI Index

PSI Item	Item: 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Sum[1]
1. Feel good just to hear a familiar voice.		.41	.25	.39	.44	.40	.26	.51	.71
2. Feel more relaxed when the newscasters kid around with one another.			.24	.34	.44	.32	.08	.40	.63
3. Compare what the newscaster says to your own thoughts and feelings.				.41	.18	.07	.09	.21	.44
4. Watch and listen as if the newscaster were talking directly to you.					.44	.36	.10	.53	.69
5. Take advice from them as you would from a friend.						.48	.22	.57	.74
6. Acknowledge the opening greeting or signoff?							.25	.57	.69
7. Feel bad when a newscaster makes a mistake.								.27	.44
8. Treat the newscast like a "conversation" with someone that you know.									.80

Alpha (8 items) = .80
Alpha (6 items) = .82

[1] Correlation of the item with the PSI index value based on all eight items.

Table III

Characteristics of Loyal and Non-Loyal Viewers

	Loyalty Category: Non-Loyal . . . Loyal					
Mean Value for:	1	2	3	4	F	P
PSI	2.67	2.65	3.03	3.37	17.6	.001
Cmty orient.	3.60	3.56	3.85	4.36	19.4	.001
Age	3.72	3.67	4.33	5.03	12.1	.001
Education	5.35	5.34	5.21	5.56	.52	ns
Income	4.88	4.30	5.05	4.96	1.90	ns
Cmty ties	1.99	2.80	3.10	3.14	21.97	.001
n =	80	65	110	70/325		

Table IV

Zero-order correlates of loyalty and para-social interaction (PSI)

	Variables					
Variables	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Viewer loyalty	.29***	.33***	.36***	.29***	.01	.04
2. PSI index		.49***	.15**	.08	-.23***	-.10*
3. Perceived cmty orient of newscast			.25***	.15**	-.13**	-.01
4. Cmty tie index				.33***	.06	.21***
5. Age					.08	.18***
6. Education						.23***
7. Income						

*** p < .001

** p < .01

* p < .05

Table V

Partial Correlates of Viewer Loyalty

	Partials	
Correlates of loyalty	A	B
PSI Index	.26	.29
Perc. cmty orient. of newscast	.28	.30
Cmty tie index		.29

(A) First-order partial controlling for cmty tie.

(B) Third-order partial controlling for age, education, and income.